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NLP: Applied Magic

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One: Matching Representations

In studying magic I've been exposed to a lot of related fields-history, mythology, music-which enrich my understanding of my vocation. One of the most helpful series of books I've encountered is a set of five volumes starting with The Structure of Magic I. and II. which focus on psychology.

John Grinder and Richard Bandler developed the field they called Neuro Linguistic Programming, or NLP. One reason I suggest everyone I know become familiar with it is that they've taught this stuff to salespeople, managers, Pentagon employees I see their techniques on television commercials and read about them in seminar descriptions. NLP is a people manipulator par excellence, and I think it's important others are made aware of this.

Another reason is that it's so incredibly useful.

Consider this: "The meaning of a communication is the response you get." In their terms, an elegant phrase. It's changed my entire relationship with others. If I don't make myself clear, I don't blame the listener. I restate my case, maybe trying a different body language, a different representational system, a little pacing

Representational system? Well, what senses do we use to explore the world? Sight-hearing-touch, and taste and smell to a much lesser extent. So how do we think? In images, sounds and feelings-or, in NLP terms, in visual, auditory and kinesthetic representational systems.

What's interesting is that we all make images and sounds and feelings to store experience, but we're usually only conscious of using ONE system. The words we choose to describe our experiences reflect that: "I'm not very focused and I can't see what you're saying." Or, "I've got a handle on the feeling that's been bugging me." Or, "I hear that, it sounds like it will work."

Spend one hour listening to people and you can verify this. Now, if I say, "I just can't feel good about that," and the person I'm talking to says "I don't see what's wrong with it," my communication hasn't received the response I want. If I switch to my partner's most favored representational system and say, "Let me make that clear to you. It looks like a really bad situation," that's one way to match, or pace my partner.

See what I mean? Or maybe that gives you a feel for the power of this particular "psychology".

What does any of this have to do with paganism or magic? For starters, I wonder how many circle conflicts could be solved by something as simple as accommodating each other's most favored rep. system.

In a working circle, is someone having trouble visualizing a goal? Is someone else very good at constructing mental temples, but totally unable to feel when to release the energy? Put them together, get them to trade notes and teach each other; both skills are part of the same experience.

When you direct rituals, do you always include something to see or imagine, hear or sing, feel-in the body or tactually? Do your rituals work for some people and not others? You might check to be sure you're satisfying everyone's most favored rep. system.

The function of magic is the response you get.

Two- Inside/Outside

Remember representational systems? The idea that humans think in images, sounds, and feelings?

While we're calling up images (a process called accessing), we're not able to look at what's going on in front of us. While we're listening to music, we're not able to remember our favorite song. While we're feeling our shoulders for tension, we're not aware of the touch of cloth against our skin. Seeing with the mind's eye and the physical eye are mutually exclusive processes.

In Neuro Linguistic Programming, accessing - thinking - is called downtime, and observing with the senses is labeled up-time.

I run up-time as a meditation. Try this: for three minutes, look at the colors in front of you, the textures of surfaces, shapes listen to the volume and pitch of all sounds in your vicinity feel the surface you're sitting on, your hand touching something in front of you

The next time you generate an internal image, talk to yourself, feel your stomach tightening - notice the difference. It's the difference between accessing and observing, downtime and up-time, external and internal reality.

One thing that I notice about up-time is that it links to the concept 'sacred'. When I take a walk by the river, I watch the water rippling over rocks, listen to the white noise of the current, feel the moist air touching my skin. I bring myself out of my own internal creations and allow myself to live in the world.

Another thing I notice about up-time is that some people don't do it very much. Most of us drop into internal reality when our environment is unpleasant, and that's a very useful thing to be able to do. But then a lot of people forget to come back out- come to their senses, literally - and experience the world again.

Such people are very difficult to talk to. When I have a conversation, I like my partner to be listening to what I say, and watching my body language. More often, my partner is access sing some internal meaning for, or response to, what I'm saying. That internal meaning may or may not have anything to do with what I'm communicating.

It isn't possible to observe someone (with all senses) when we're accessing. It isn't possible to achieve rapport with a person we're not observing. One of the bases of magical group workings is rapport between the participants.

Try this: the next time you have a conversation about magic, observe your partner. Watch for: body position and gestures. Often people I talk to demonstrate what they feel when they do magic. [A woman describing her circle method moved her hand from her forehead down toward her feet, from shoulder to shoulder, and from her heart straight in front of her - gesturing the three energy poles a circle creates.]

Listen for: sensory descriptions -"I saw, I heard, I felt."

Learning to go into up-time at will, and differentiate our representations of reality from our observations, is perhaps the most useful magical skill we can possess. It provides the basis for a reality check; it helps us communicate our experiences more effectively to others, and to help them duplicate what we do; and it is one of the most profound

alterations of consciousness.

Brandy Williams

Bibliography

Works by Richard Bandler & John Grinder:

- The Structure of Magic I.
- The Structure of Magic II.
- Frogs to Princes
- Reframing
- Trance-formations

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